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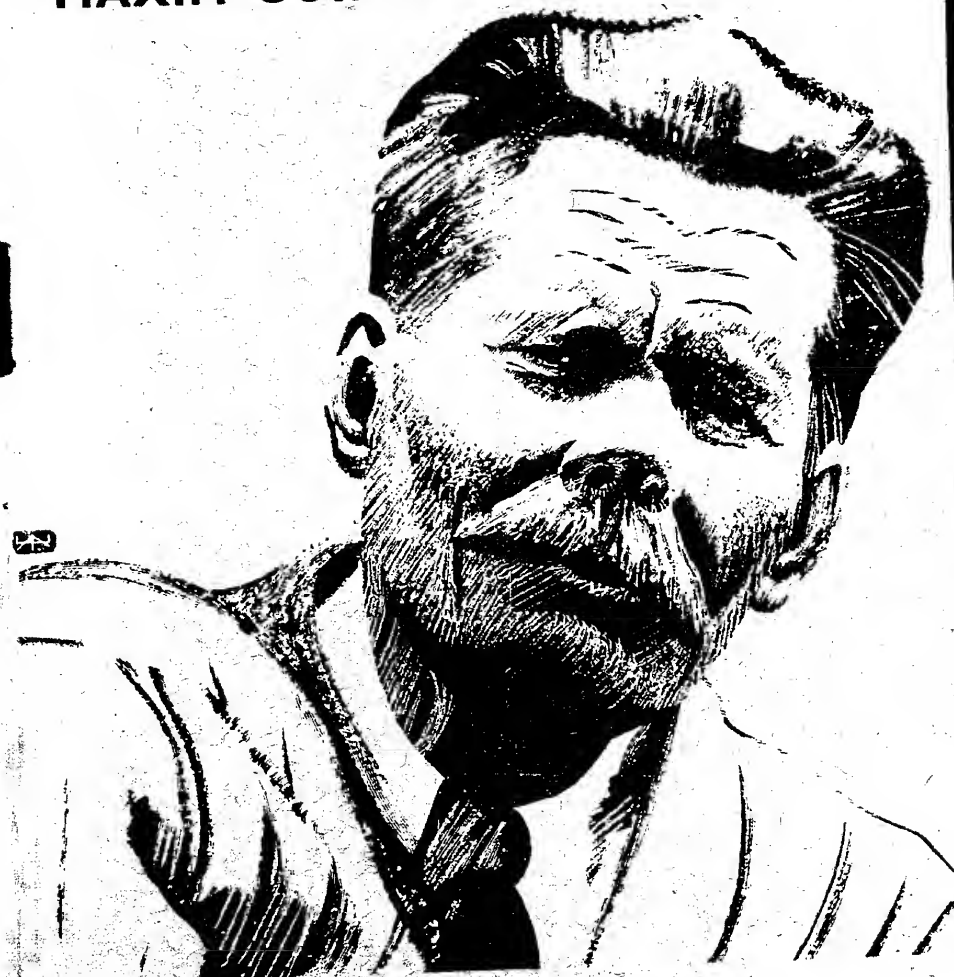
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UNITY THEATRE EDITION

AND THE OTHERS

A Play by

MAXIM GORKI



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PRICE ONE SHILLING NETT.

AND THE OTHERS

UNITY THEATRE

UNITY THEATRE exists to encourage the expression in dramatic form of the lives and aspirations of the ordinary people.

IT INVITES authors, actors, and all interested in the theatre to take part in its activities, and welcomes the collaboration of the many "dramatic" groups, the players in factories, offices, barracks, shelters, schools, colleges and elsewhere.

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THIS PLAY was produced because of its historical interest, and its peculiarly apt message for the present-day world.

AND THE OTHERS

A PLAY

by

MAXIM GORKI

Adapted for the English Stage

by

GIBSON - COWAN

LONDON:

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CHARACTERS

DOSTIGAEFF . . .	A merchant.
ELIZAVETA . . .	His wife.
ANTONIA . . .	His daughter.
ALEXEI . . .	His son.
PAVLIN . . .	A priest.
SVONTZOFF . . .	Late member of the firm of Bulichoff, now Commissar of the Provisional Government.
VARVARA . . .	His wife, daughter of the late Yegor Bulichoff.
XENIA . . .	Widow of Yegor Bulichoff.
SHURA . . .	Bulichoff's illegitimate daughter.
GLASHA . . .	Bulichoff's servant and mistress.
MELANIA . . .	The abbess, Xenia's sister.
TAISSIA . . .	A novice.
PROPOTEJ . . .	The blessed.
TIATIN . . .	Svontzoff's nephew.
YAKOV LAPTEFF . . .	Bulichoff's godson.
BETTLING . . .	A general in one of the govern- ment departments.
YOSIP . . .	An old priest.
NESTRASNY . . .	Former mayor.
VICTOR . . .	Nestrasny's son.
TZELOVANIEV . . .	Meat merchant.
MOKROUSOFF . . .	Ex-policeman, now secretary of the Commercial Club.
LISOGONOFF . . .	A manufacturer.
GUBIN . . .	A landowner.
TROEROKOFF . . .	A miller.
A BEARDED SOLDIER	
DONAT. . .	The gamekeeper.

The action of the play takes place in a Provincial Russian Town.

PROLOGUE

Maxim Gorki needs no introduction as a writer and a student of human affairs, his short stories and plays dealing with the lives of ordinary people having been translated into many languages. In 1929, in connection with the work he was doing to help and encourage the new generation, he planned to write three plays to tell the story of the revolution. There were two revolutions—the first in February 1917 overthrew the Czar, and the second in November of the same year overthrew the capitalist Provisional government under Prince George Lvov.

Gorki commences the first play entitled "Yegor Bulichoff" at the time before the first revolution. In the house of a wealthy business man, Yegor Bulichoff, we hear rumours of the bad state of things, of the poverty caused by the war, of the trouble at Court, and of the strikes and the demonstrations against the profiteers. Yegor's family circle talks of fighting in the town and starvation in the country, of the peasants rising against their masters, and Yegor is frightened. He knows that the system, like himself, is dying. He is sick in body and mind and convinced of the end.

When his erstwhile mistress, Melania, now an abbess, tries out a 'cure' with the aid of a hired hallucinator performing on a trumpet, Bulichoff yells: "Go on, Gabriel, give it to them! Blow, Gabriel, blow, it is the end of the world!"

From which we can see he neither knew the whole story nor appreciated that the world does not end—he only suspected. He suspected his own godson, Yakov, of being against him. He suspected his own daughter, Varvara, of match making with a careerist socialist, Svontzoff, who would get all his money and go into society. He even feared Shura, the happy-go-lucky Shura who laughed at formal behaviour and old fashioned ways. When physically scared by Propotej, a fanatical priest also provided by Melania, Bulichoff's brain gave way.

This is the background of the play that follows: the second of the series. The new order gaining confidence among the ruins of the old.

Before the third play could be written about the first years of the Soviet regime, Gorki died.

ROBERT MITCHELL

ACT I

A room in the Commercial Club. Several small tables and chairs. At the back, large double doors. To the right, down stage, a door leading to the buffet. Up stage left, a third door to a card-room. Along the left wall, below the door, a settee upon which is seated Yosip. He is a very old priest, quite bald, dressed in a faded cassock and peasant's boots. He wears glasses and is shortsightedly filling a black pipe from a tobacco-pouch.

On the back wall, on either side of the double doors are two gilt frames. That on the right contains a portrait of Czar Nicholas II. The frame on the left is empty and the waiter is at the moment draping it with red ribbon. He comes down from the short step-ladder, moves it over to the other frame and removes the canvas. There is a burst of applause from behind the double doors. The waiter descends from the ladder and goes off through the card-room. The double doors open and we get a glimpse of a crowded assembly hall and a speaker's platform. Lisogonoff comes from the hall with Troerokoff. Lisogonoff sees the ladder and glances up to the empty frames.

LISOGONOFF: Well, your majesty, so they've had your picture removed from the club (sighs). Well! Well! (They go off into the buffet, Nestrasny comes in with Pavlin. They seat themselves at one of the tables. Nestrasny walks with a slight limp and carries a stick.)

NESTRASNY: They are merely trying to frighten us with their talk of Lenin and the bolsheviks. Leave them to me, there are ways of dealing with them.

PAVLIN: Lenin thinks only of the bodies of men, and not of their immortal souls.

NESTRASNY: While the church looks after their souls and doesn't care too much about their bodies.

PAVLIN: That is unjust, the church has always been foremost in the field of social reform.

NESTRASNY: If you ask me, the church has always been opposed to any sort of progress.

PAVLIN: It is not progress we are opposed to, but blasphemy. (Tzelovaniev comes back from the buffet with Troerokoff. The waiter comes back from the card-room, and meets Dostigaevff by the

centre doorway. Dostigaeff nods toward the ladder, and the waiter carries it away. Dostigaeff stands watching the group talking.)

TZELOVANIEV: What is the discussion about?

PAVLIN: Nestrasny is always criticizing the church. The church agrees that the Czar was unfit to govern, but you must find somebody to take his place. *(The waiter comes in with drinks; he is followed by Lisogonoff.)*

TROEROKOFF: We live as in a dream.

LISOGONOFF: You should hear them cursing Svontzoff in the buffet.

TZELOVANIEV: Well, now that we have got no Czar, the only thing to do is to curse the nearest commissar of the Provisional Government.

TROEROKOFF: How things happen! And to think that not more than a few months ago he was totting up ledgers in Bulichoff's office!

NESTRASNY: What have you got to say about it all, Dostigaeff?

DOSTIGAEFF: I haven't got anything to say, I am just listening.

NESTRASNY: Plotting something?

DOSTIGAEFF: No, just listening.

NESTRASNY: What do you hope to get out of all this?

DOSTIGAEFF: What do you?

PAVLIN: By the way, in his speech just now, Svontzoff spoke most offensively of the church. Amongst other things he had the impertinence to say that we used a language which could not be understood by the congregation, and dared to suggest that we should hold the service in Russian to make the voice of God more comprehensible to the common people.

DOSTIGAEFF: If the common people are good enough to fight for their God, I suppose that they are good enough to know what they are fighting for.

LISOGONOFF: Fighting? They are deserting by hundreds. All Russia is deserting.

PAVLIN: It is all this twaddle about free thought, the will of the people, and so forth. Hold the service in Russian indeed. For years the Catholic church has held its services in Latin without the power of Roman Catholicism diminishing. *(Yosip lights his pipe.)*

NESTRASNY: We have had enough speeches for one evening.

TROEROKOFF: Let him go on.

NESTRASNY: Aren't you ever satisfied.

PAVLIN *(angry)*: You are all the same, an accident throws you all into the sphere of politics, and you think you know everything. There is a higher power that leads us wherever we go, and religion teaches us to follow its guidance.

NESTRASNY: I am not arguing against religion.

PAVLIN: Religion is our only shield against the machinations of the devil.

TROEROKOFF: He doesn't really believe in the devil?

PAVLIN: Moreover the church realizes that before we can have peace without we must put our own house in order. Since we have been deprived of a civil leader in the form of the Czar, we must replace him by a religious leader.

TZELOVANIEV: But tell us, what are we supposed to do?

LISOGONOFF: I don't care who we have for a leader as long as we have a leader. The devil himself will do as far as I am concerned.

TZELOVANIEV: We don't seem to be getting much nearer a solution. There has been nothing but talk. Like a lot of women—worse, the women don't let the revolution interfere with their work, they just keep on in the kitchen.

DOSTIGAEFF: Here comes Gubin. Father Pavlin! *(He goes off.)*

PAVLIN: I won't meet him. It is not meet that a servant of the church should associate with such people. *(He goes to door on right. To Yosip.)* Can't you find somewhere else to smoke your filthy pipe?

YOSIP: It's not the pipe, it's the tobacco, and there is nothing else to smoke, nothing.

PAVLIN: The place smells like a stable.

NESTRASNY: You had better hurry. *(Pavlin casts a glance over his shoulder and hurries out. Nestrasny follows. Dostigaeff comes back with Gubin, a stout man with flabby face.)*

GUBIN: You mean the red-haired woman in the green dress? A nice figure, plump, appetizing. What should you say her age was?

DOSTIGAEFF: I have no idea.

GUBIN: Between thirty and forty, the dangerous age. The most interesting. But you are always too wrapped up in business to care anything about women.

DOSTIGAEFF: Am I? I suppose so.

YOSIP (*to Gubin*): If you would excuse me a moment. . . .

GUBIN: Well, what do you want?

YOSIP: Pardon me for mentioning it at this moment, but there is a little matter of some geese which you shot.

GUBIN: I've told you I won't pay for your geese. You can go to law if you like but you won't get a penny out of me either way. (*Goes into buffet. Yosip sighs and returns to the couch. He opens his pouch, smells the tobacco and puts it away with a sigh.*)

TZELOVANIIEV: How the clergy fear Gubin.

LISOGONOFF: They know that he owes them something. If it hadn't been for the bishop, he would have been one of the town councillors.

TZELOVANIIEV: I thought that it was Nestrasny who had the most say in getting him pushed out?

LISOGONOFF: Nestrasny has had his day. He and his black hundreds have been the virtual rulers of this town long enough. Whatever happens it won't be long before we see the last of Nestrasny.

NESTRASNY (*coming back*): What is that you are saying about me?

TZELOVANIIEV: We were just talking about Gubin, and why he was not elected to the council.

NESTRASNY: That was nothing to do with me, he insulted the bishop at the dinner party, and he saw to it that he wasn't elected.

TROEROKOFF: If you ask me, he is a little off his head.

NESTRASNY: Quite possibly, but we can't build an asylum for one lunatic, it's more convenient to let him be at large.

LISOGONOFF: What is all the noise in the buffet? (*He goes out. Nestrasny and Tzelovaniev follow him. Troerokoff takes a drink of cognac and hiccoughs.*)

YOSIP: Good luck.

TROEROKOFF: That was a hiccough, not a sneeze.

YOSIP: I beg your pardon.

TROEROKOFF: Where are you from?

YOSIP: From a suburb of Komarovoi.

TROEROKOFF: You are waiting for someone?

YOSIP: The abbess, she arranged to meet me here.

TROEROKOFF: Have a drink.

YOSIP (*taking it*): Brandy? That's the first brandy I have tasted since the revolution. There is no brandy anywhere except home brewed, and you can't even get that. I tell you Russia is falling to pieces.

TROEROKOFF: Good health.

YOSIP: Good health. Ah! Ah! Excellent! (*offers his glass for more. From the buffet come General Bettling and Lisogonoff, followed by Dostigaeff, Mokrousoff and Nestrasny.*)

BETTLING: All right, all right, here sit down. (*They sit.*) Now what is it you want to know?

LISOGONOFF: If you could spare the time to tell me a . . .

BETTLING: All right. What is it?

LISOGONOFF: We hear rumours everywhere. Tales of the bolsheviks and this man Lenin. Is there such a person or is he a myth?

BETTLING: Oh no, Lenin is unfortunately real enough.

LISOGONOFF: Where is he?

MOKROUSSOFF: They say that he has escaped to Sweden. (*Melania comes in and speaks to Yosip, he gives her a paper and she goes off with him to the main room, through the centre doorway.*)

BETTLING: Sweden will give him back to us. But you are wasting your time with politics. The duties of a town councillor are to look after the town, there is a Provisional Government to look after the country. At the moment the streets are in such a state that it is impossible to drive in them.

LISOGONOFF: But these rumours, you can't get any idea of the real truth. There are even rumours that there are bolsheviks in this town.

BETTLING: There are rumours that there are bolsheviks everywhere, the people seem to have nothing better to do than to invent rumours.

LISOGONOFF: But yesterday I was speaking to the wife of Commissar Svontzoff, and she says . . .

BETTLING: I don't care what she says, Varvara ought to know better than to talk gossip.

MOKROUSSOFF: She is right, however, there certainly are bolsheviks here.

BETTLING: Well, and what are they doing?

TROEROKOFF: They preach socialism, just as the social revolutionaries do.

BETTLING: There is always somebody preaching something in any government. You have no need to worry yourselves over the bolsheviks, Prince Lvov cleared them out of Petrograd, and they will clear them out of here.

LISOGONOFF: Lvov, the lion! The donkey.

DOSTIGAEFF: Your excellency, some of us are doubtful of the strength of the Provisional Government.

NESTRASNY: We hear stories that people are turning against it everywhere, important people, lawyers, professors, and what not.

BETTLING: We must support the Provisional Government. Our only chance is to get the country into some kind of order. Any of the foolish ideas of the bolsheviks would only result in chaos.

NESTRASNY: Bulichoff's godson is still mixed up with these people.

TZELOVANIEV: He takes after his father; he was off his head.

DOSTIGAEFF: There was nothing wrong with Bulichoff's brain, he was sane enough.

BETTLING: Yes, certainly he had brains, he worked his way up from a small shopkeeper to die a merchant.

NESTRASNY: You mean that he married a fool with money. Riches were too much for him, he became swollen headed. I went to see him on some business shortly before he died. He was as stubborn as Gubin.

BETTLING: Oh, yes, he was stubborn.

NESTRASNY: Stubborn and self-centred, he imagined that the whole world revolved round him.

BETTLING (*looking at his watch*): It's about time they started. (*Dostigaeff goes into the buffet, followed by Mokrousoff and Lisogonoff. Nestrasy goes into the hall.*)

TROEROKOFF: Your excellency.

BETTLING: Well?

TROEROKOFF: Your excellency, you may have noticed that the portrait of His Royal Highness Nicholas II has been removed from its frame. It will be necessary for the club to hold a special meeting to discuss the exact portrait to replace it. Could I be so bold as to ask your excellency . . .

BETTLING: Do you think I care who they put in the frame. At a time like this, when half Russia is in chaos, haven't you anything better to think about. (*Dostigaeff comes out of the buffet with Elizaveta; they are followed by Lisogonoff.*)

ELIZAVETA: I tell you it is necessary to make a show. (*Seeing Bettling.*) Ah, I have been looking for you.

BETTLING: Well, here I am.

ELIZAVETA: I have just been saying that we must make some sort of show, the common people are used to pomp and ceremony. A government can't expect to hold its own unless the people are impressed.

LISOGONOFF: And how long do you expect the people to be content with your puppet show?

ELIZAVETA: They have been content up till now.

LISOGONOFF: That is all the more reason why they won't stand it any longer.

BETTLING: Politics! Have I got to stand here all day listening to politics? I'm sick of politics. I have been waiting for you for the last half-hour and nobody has talked anything but politics. That is what is the matter with Russia. Nobody knows anything and everybody talks too much.

LISOGONOFF: Now even the soldiers imagine . . .

BETTLING: Stop it, my friend.

ELIZAVETA: Very well, we won't talk any more about it.

What are you doing after the meeting, shall we dance?

BETTLING: Anything as long as I am not asked to stay here. I'm tired.

VARVARA (*from buffet*): Liza, have you seen Andrej?

ELIZAVETA: The last time I saw him he was in the hall. What's the matter, you look upset.

VARVARA: I? Not a bit.

LISOGONOFF: Good evening, Mrs. Svontzoff; has your husband decided to have me executed yet?

VARVARA: That is left to Nestrasy and his black hundreds.

ELIZAVETA: We are to talk no more politics. Come along. (*Leads Bettling into the hall. The crowd slowly begin to move back into the hall, during the scene the waiter comes in and closes the double doors. Melania comes back from the room right.*)

MELANIA: Varvara, I want you.

VARVARA: Excuse me.

LISOGONOFF: Certainly.

MELANIA: Varvara, I was listening to Andrej. Why was he talking all that nonsense about the church? It will do him no good; you should know better than to let him make a speech like that. Without the church you would be powerless. Can you imagine the people with neither the fear of the Czar nor the fear of God?

VARVARA: But you didn't understand. Andrej was saying that it is necessary to bring religion nearer to the people, that religion should be more simple; the church should not rule by fear but by love.

MELANIA: Tell him to leave us to look after the church. For centuries Russia has been ruled by fear. The peasants understand nothing else. Let him try to run the country by love and he will last five minutes. Now go, I want to talk to Nestrasy. (*Varvara goes out left, Nestrasy comes in with Mokrousoff. Melania listens.*)

MOKROUSSOFF: I haven't found him yet.

NESTRASNY: When you were working for me in the committee you seemed to manage things better.

MOKROUSSOFF: These days people aren't so reliable.

NESTRASNY: Or you are not so reliable. Lapteff addresses meetings every day, he must hide somewhere.

MOKROUSSOFF: Maybe, but he never goes out alone at nights, and in the day it is too risky.

NESTRASNY: All right, I'll leave it to you. But I trust you won't forget that you are supposed to be a patriot. (*Mokrousoff goes.*)

MELANIA: Are you coming in to the meeting?

NESTRASNY: I beg your pardon, I didn't see you.

MELANIA: They have already started. (*She goes in with him. Tiatin comes in, he sits down at a table and begins to write. Svontzoff comes out of the hall and hurriedly crosses as to the buffet.*)

TIATIN: I want a word with you.

SVONTZOFF: It will have to wait, at the moment I have no time.

TIATIN (*threateningly*): I am afraid that you will have to find time. You have been spreading rumours about Shura and myself.

SVONTZOFF: What do you mean rumours?

TIATIN: You have suggested that at my instigation Shura has stolen money belonging to Yegor.

SVONTZOFF: Let go my coat, this is a public place. Do you want to start a scandal?

TIATIN: That wouldn't be a bad idea.

SVONTZOFF: I don't know who invented the rumour, I certainly had nothing to do with it. You arranged with me to marry Shura, if you had done as I said the money would have come to you and you could have joined me in the business.

TIATIN: Whether I chose to marry Shura or not is my affair.

SVONTZOFF: I tell you I haven't repeated the rumour. Money! What is money worth now? What is more important is that you have joined the peasants against us. What are they to you? You are an intelligent person.

TIATIN: You fool. (*He goes out. Svontzoff mops his brow with his handkerchief. Varvara comes out with Dostigaeff.*)

DOSTIGAEFF: Wait here a moment and I will fetch you something. (*Goes into the buffet.*)

SVONTZOFF: What is he after?

VARVARA: Why didn't you tell me that there was a meeting?

SVONTZOFF: Why should I?

VARVARA: Because you can't be trusted to speak without making a fool of yourself. I suppose that you think your speech did you a lot of good? All it did was to make enemies all round. It's not the time to attack things or offend people. Within the next few months anything may happen. We may be in the hands of the church, of Nestrasy and his black hundreds, or in the hands of Lapteff and his bolsheviks, for that matter.

SVONTZOFF: What are you getting heated about? There is no need to shout at the top of your voice so that the whole world can hear you. (*Elizaveta comes out of the hall.*)

ELIZAVETA: Ah, my dearest Andrej.

SVONTZOFF: What do you want?

ELIZAVETA: He looks worried, the poor lamb. You should look after him, Varvara.

SVONTZOFF: Leave me alone.

ELIZAVETA: I shall do nothing of the kind. Come, Varvara, let us make him take us to the buffet for a drink. (*They go to buffet. Melania comes out of the hall with Pavlin.*)

MELANIA: Well, I have been looking for you for an hour. Have you spoken to Propotej?

PAVLIN: Yes, yes. Very temperamental. I am also afraid that he is too partial to alcoholic liquors.

MELANIA: Never mind that. Are the verses suitable?

PAVLIN: Good enough, I will speak about them to Yosip.

MELANIA: Propotej can be of use to us. The people fear him.

We shall need someone who can inspire fear. It is the church's chance to take over the reins of government. Now or never. You can see for yourself there is no agreement among the merchants. *(She goes back. Gubin comes in with Troerokoff and Lisogonoff. All drunk.)*

GUBIN: Ah, the priest. And you can tell your friend Yosip that he can go to hell with his geese. *(Pavlin goes out.)* You should have seen the old fool when I shot his geese!

LISOGONOFF: Gubin, the question is are we going to make peace with Germany or are we going to go on fighting?

TROEROKOFF: But there is no Czar, how can we go on fighting?

GUBIN: Of course we can't go on fighting, and shall I tell you why? Not because we've got no Czar, but because we've got no boots. I'll tell you something. Dostigaeff bribed Bettling for a government order to supply the troops with boots, and when they put them on, their feet went straight through them. *(Roars with laughter. The crowd begins to pour back into the room. Gubin and Lisogonoff go back to the bar.)*

NESTRASNY: I have heard enough, I don't know how I have managed to sit out as much as I have. But what about you?

MELANIA: I can always hear speeches. Tell me, what is the news? *(Dostigaeff comes back and takes up his favourite position at the door, listening.)*

NESTRASNY: This isn't the place to talk. Come in to see me to-morrow.

MELANIA: Is it true the peasants are revolting?

NESTRASNY: They won't cause trouble. The peasant can't live without a master.

MELANIA: The peasant, my friend, has been taught discontent.

NESTRASNY: The peasants will be satisfied with a scrap of land, it is the factory workers we have to fear.

DOSTIGAEFF: And how will you satisfy them?

NESTRASNY: In nineteen hundred and seven we taught the workers their place, we can do so again. Have you forgotten?

DOSTIGAEFF: I was wondering whether they remembered.

MELANIA: You are talking nonsense. I suppose the next thing will be that we find you on their side. You are as bad as Yegor.

DOSTIGAEFF: I shall remain silent. *(Gubin comes back from the bar.)*

GUBIN: Ah, Nestrasy, so it is you. It's you. It's a long time since we met, isn't it? A long time.

NESTRASNY: You're drunk.

GUBIN: Drunk am I? Well, drunk or not drunk, I haven't forgotten it was you I have to thank for being pushed out of the council. It won't be long before you are pushed out. Pushed out, I say. Well, what are you looking at me for, are you afraid?

NESTRASNY: You're drunk.

GUBIN: You said that before. I'm drunk. You said that . . . I'm drunk. Very well. Give me your hand. We'll make friends, eh? *(He pulls the stick out of Nestrasy's hand. Several people gather round.)*

GUBIN: So you don't want to make friends, eh? Why eh? Do you think you are better than me, eh? I tell you I am a peasant of the purest blood, the purest blood, a true Russian.

NESTRASNY: Let me go.

GUBIN: I'll show you that I am good enough to shake hands with you.

MOKROUSSOFF: Come along, come along. *(He takes hold of Gubin. The crowd gather round.)*

GUBIN: Who has got hold of me, eh? Let me go. I'll send in a complaint. I'll burn the club. *(He is carried out to the buffet. The crowd follows them.)*

DOSTIGAEFF: And when they are tired of talking they squabble among themselves.

Curtain.

ACT II

A room in Bulichoff's house. At the back, a window heavily curtained. The furniture is massive and ugly. A carved table, leather chairs, and too many ornaments and pictures. In the right wall a door leads to a hall and we catch a glimpse of a staircase to the upper rooms. At the back a door to the kitchen and garden. In front of the stove down left, Glasha is seated, sewing a shirt. At the table Taissia is reading a magazine.

TAISSIA: Is there really a town of Alexandria or is it just a story?

GLASHA: I think it's a town.

TAISSIA: I never knew that the world was such a big place. Where is it?

GLASHA: I believe it's the capital of somewhere.

TAISSIA: I thought that it was just invented. Do you think that I should ever be able to write books?

GLASHA: Do you want to?

TAISSIA: No, I think they are silly, they never tell you about any of the things you want to know. What is the good of reading about places that you can't ever see?

GLASHA: Books teach us how to make the world a better place to live in.

TAISSIA: I don't like reading.

GLASHA: You should persevere, you will get to like it better in time.

TAISSIA: You are like the abbess. It was she who taught me to read. If I wasn't quick enough she used to rap my knuckles. I hate people.

GLASHA: Everybody is not like Melania.

TAISSIA: I know all the gospels by heart, but it doesn't do me any good; they never told me anything about what was happening around me. What is happening here now? Nobody tells me, and you can't read about it. Won't you tell me what is going on, Glasha? You need not be afraid, I won't split on you to the abbess.

GLASHA (*smiling*): My dear, I am not afraid of your abbess, but I don't know enough to explain. Here's Donat, you should ask him.

TAISSIA: Donat! He's an old man. Isn't there anyone else to talk to round here?

DONAT (*coming in from kitchen*): Well, I have finished the gate, now what is the matter in the attic?

GLASHA: The door squeaks. Svontzoff says he can't get any sleep.

DONAT: All right, I'll see to it. By the way Propotej is in the kitchen.

GLASHA: I know, he's waiting to see the abbess.

DONAT: Glasha, do something for me. Ask him in here to wait, and give him some tea.

GLASHA: Why should I?

DONAT: Because I want you to. Shall I tell him to come in?

GLASHA: Very well. (*Donat goes out.*)

TAISSIA: Propotej is a crook.

GLASHA: I know, but if Donat wants me to look after him, he's got a good reason for it.

TAISSIA: I don't care for Donat. (*Tiatin comes in from the hall. He is dressed in a soldier's uniform and over his shoulders is an old grey coat. His hair has been cropped close.*)

TIATIN: Is Shura at home?

GLASHA: She's upstairs.

TIATIN (*taking a biscuit from the table and munching it*): What are you reading, Taissia?

GLASHA: Tiatin will tell you where Alexandria is, Taissia.

TAISSIA: Where is it?

TIATIN: Alexandria? It's in Egypt.

TAISSIA: Where's Egypt?

TIATIN: It's a long way away; you have to go right through the Black Sea, and into the Mediterranean.

TAISSIA: Is it a big place?

TIATIN: It was once the greatest country in the world.

TAISSIA: Like Russia?

TIATIN: Russia will be the greatest country again, one day.

TAISSIA: I don't like reading.

TIATIN: Don't you? Never mind, next time I come I will bring you a book with some pictures of Egypt. Glasha, when Yakov comes tell him I'm waiting for him up in his room. (*He goes out right.*)

TAISSIA: I like him.

GLASHA (*smiling*): Why?

TAISSIA: I don't know. He'd look better if he'd let his hair grow. I like talking to him.

GLASHA: He could teach you a lot of things.

TAISSIA: I dare say. I know the sort of things girls learn from men. There were two girls last year in the convent. I'm not a fool, I know what happened to them.

GLASHA (*teasing*): I do believe that you've fallen in love with Tiatin.

TAISSIA: I don't believe in love, and the abbess has told me I am not to talk to men alone.

GLASHA: Religion will never stop people loving. You'll learn, too, that you cannot escape from it. (*Donat comes back with Propotej. 'The blessed' is now dressed in the drab coat of an ordinary peasant. His head has been shaved. He looks round suddenly.*)

DONAT (*pleasantly*): Sit down.

TAISSIA: He's had all his hair cut off.

PROPOTEJ: I am not going to talk in front of her; she will go straight to the abbess.

GLASHA (*rising*): Come along, Taissia.

TAISSIA: I won't go. I'm never allowed to listen to anything.

DONAT: There is nothing for you to listen to.

TAISSIA: Well, I won't go. If you turn me out I'll tell the abbess you turned me out, and she will know it was because you were plotting something you didn't want her to hear.

YAKOV (*coming in*): Taissia, you are being a silly girl, run along.

TAISSIA: Oh, very well. (*She goes out with Glasha.*)

PROPOTEJ: A small snake, but poisonous.

DONAT: You are just in time, Yakov; this is Propotej.

YAKOV: I know him.

PROPOTEJ: I know you, too; I have heard you speak in the park and outside Dostigaeff's factory.

YAKOV: While you were walking round chanting your rhymes and collecting money from the crowd.

PROPOTEJ: They are not my prophecies, I can't even write. There is a priest in the suburbs, a gooseherd, he writes them for me.

YAKOV: So they are written by Father Yosip?

PROPOTEJ: Yes, all of them. I admit I used to make them up myself at first, but they weren't much good. Then I met the abbess and she got Father Yosip to do them for me.

YAKOV: So it is Melania who is responsible for all this poison in the ears of the people.

PROPOTEJ: Yes, that's just it. What the rhymes say are really nothing to do with me.

DONAT: What did you do before you started all this nonsense?

PROPOTEJ: I was a blacksmith. My father was a blacksmith, he died when I was eighteen. He was murdered. The governor of Kharkov had him flogged, and he died of hemorrhage. I ran away and decided to become a priest. But why do you ask me all this?

DONAT: You need not be afraid, you won't come to any harm through us. How did you come to think of the rhymes?

PROPOTEJ: One day I met a defrocked priest; he was a vagrant like myself. He gave me some good advice. 'People,' he said, 'are stupid and easily frightened; prey upon their superstitions and you can do what you like with them. If they are afraid of you, they will give you food and money to go away.' So I began to act so that I would frighten people; and the priest was right; they were so stupid that I sometimes found myself ashamed. Now I pity them. I have walked through Russia from one end to the other with a belly full of food, and a pocket full of coppers, and everywhere round me was poverty. You get tired of playing the idiot and it's a relief to find someone like you to talk to.

YAKOV: And now?

PROPOTEJ: I'm afraid, that's it, afraid. I've spent my life frightening people, and now I am frightened myself. They are still trying to use me, and they don't realize that my time is past, the people are waking up.

YAKOV: And what made you come here?

PROPOTEJ: I had heard Donat speaking to a crowd outside Troerokoff's mill. They were threatening me, and I thought I would like to tell somebody.

YAKOV: Who was threatening you?

DONAT: It's Pavlin and the abbess, they have given him a new set of prophecies, warning the peasants against the bolsheviks.

YAKOV: Very pretty.

PROPOTEJ: I have to threaten them with eternal damnation if they do not support the church.

YAKOV: If you try, you'll stand a good chance of having your head torn off.

PROPOTEJ: That's it, I'm frightened. I am at home with peasants, but all this is too much for me. I'm caught up in something that is too big for me to understand.

YAKOV: And what do you expect us to do?

PROPOTEJ: You see, the abbess. . . .

XENIA (*coming in from the hall*): Donat, what does this mean?

DONAT: Mrs. Bulichoff. . .

XENIA (*to Propotej*): How dare you come here after what has happened?

YAKOV: Keep calm, why shouldn't he come here?

XENIA: Why shouldn't he come here? You do nothing but fill the house with your low companions, you treat the house like a tavern. I suppose it still is my house, isn't it? And then you expect me to keep quiet while you entertain your godfather's murderer.

YAKOV: I don't know what you are talking about.

XENIA: You know very well what I am talking about. If it hadn't been for this devil, Yegor would be alive to-day. It was a plot, I know it was a plot, they frightened him to death.

PROPOTEJ: Frightened him. I've frightened many merchants but they didn't die of it.

YAKOV: You forget that it was you who brought him here.

PROPOTEJ: It was her sister, the abbess. She told me what to say, how was I to know what it would do? She told me to do it, and now she is trying to hold it over me.

YAKOV: Be quiet. Donat, take him into the kitchen, tell Glasha to give him some food. (*Donat and Propotej go out.*)

XENIA (*in tears*): Yakov, I won't have you bringing all these people into my house.

YAKOV: What do you mean by all these people?

XENIA: What's Tiatin doing here?

YAKOV: Tiatin? I expect he's come to see Shura.

XENIA: Yakov, I didn't mean to be angry with you, but can't you be a little nicer to me? After all Yegor was your god-

father. Everybody is turning against me; my own daughter plots to get money that should by rights be mine, and now you and Tiatin are turning Shura against me.

YAKOV: Shura is not turning against you. Where are the Svontzoffs?

XENIA: They are with the Bettlings. Varvara wants to leave me here and go to live in Moscow. Everybody's leaving me, even Melania.

YAKOV: Melania? I hear that she's quarrelled with the bishop and he has kicked her out. I must go up and see Tiatin.

XENIA: No, stay here and talk to me a minute. You told me you wanted Yegor's guns.

YAKOV: I'd like them.

XENIA: Take them before Varvara gets hold of them, she's selling everything. Then there are all his old clothes.

YAKOV: Thanks, give them to Glasha, she'll look after them. (*He goes out right. Xenia sits in front of the fire for a moment and then calls.*)

XENIA: Glasha!

GLASHA: Did you call me?

XENIA: Yes. What is there for dinner?

GLASHA: Why do you ask? You've already been in the kitchen.

XENIA: Glasha, why don't you talk to me, why are you so quiet?

GLASHA: What do you expect me to say?

XENIA: Anything as long as I can hear somebody talk. Things are happening all round me that I don't understand. I want somebody who can tell me about them.

GLASHA: Why should you think I can tell you?

XENIA: It's all strange to me. I'm too old to change my ways but you're younger, and Yegor always said that you were quick at grasping things. 'Glasha,' he used to say, 'she is clever.'

GLASHA: Yegor!

XENIA: Talk to me. I don't bear you a grudge because you loved my husband. Why should you hate me, Glasha?

GLASHA: I don't hate you, really. I don't. I'm sorry for you, they are making your life a hell.

XENIA: What have I done to them? Why should they want

to harm me? They want to leave me here and go off to Moscow. They will sell up my home and leave me penniless, and Varvara is my own daughter.

GLASHA: All the Svontzoff's think of is how to worm their way into society.

XENIA: I wouldn't mind if they would take some notice of me, if only they wouldn't treat me as if I was dirt.

GLASHA: You mustn't take any notice of them. Come into the kitchen and let me get you some tea.

XENIA: Thank you, Glasha. (*They go out left, there is a pause and then Yakov and Tiatin come downstairs.*)

YAKOV: I didn't want you to speak in front of Shura.

TIATIN: Shura is all right, why don't you get her to join us?

YAKOV: At the moment we can only afford to use tried leaders. Well?

TIATIN: It's all settled, the rising is fixed for the sixth. Soldiers will surround the factories and confiscate all food-stuffs. It must be our first duty to see that the people do not starve. The womenfolk must see that the bolsheviks fulfil their promises.

YAKOV: We know from what quarter we may expect trouble. I hear that there have already been attempts against your life.

TIATIN: Nestrasny is afraid to come out into the open, and the rest of the merchants don't count. There may be more bloodshed . . .

YAKOV: More bloodshed? While Kerenski and the social revolutionaries are in power there can be nothing but bloodshed. Russia is at war without even knowing the reason why, while her people starve.

SHURA (*coming in*): What are you two whispering?

YAKOV: Secrets.

SHURA: Will you always have secrets from me?

YAKOV: Shura, you are inquisitive, at a time like this curiosity is a vice.

SHURA: I am serious, I want to know what is happening. I want to help.

YAKOV: You shall one day, but you must prove that you are capable of dealing with serious matters.

SHURA: And how must I do that?

YAKOV: It means hardship and struggle and strenuous study. It takes time, there are no short cuts.

TAISSIA (*coming in with a tray*): Glasha told me to bring you in some tea.

TIATIN: Good.

TAISSIA (*pouring out*): Won't you tell me what you have been talking about?

YAKOV: We've been talking about the abbess.

TAISSIA: You are teasing. The abbess has just come, and she says that you are plotting to destroy the church. She says that you are in league with the soldiers who burnt the monastery.

TIATIN: And if we are?

TAISSIA: I wouldn't mind really. I like it better here. But I think it wrong not to fear God.

TIATIN: Taissia, do you think spying is a very nice thing to do?

TAISSIA: I wasn't spying, I wasn't really.

YAKOV: Do you think that we don't know it was Melania who sent you here.

TAISSIA (*tearfully*): Well, if it was, how can I help it?

TIATIN: You could refuse to come. Tell her that you won't be her slave and more, and that you are going to live your own life.

TAISSIA: How can I? If I don't do what she tells me she will send me away, and then what will I do?

YAKOV: You could work.

TAISSIA: What work is there for anyone like me to do?

TIATIN: There is always work, Taissia. Look at Glasha. She is twice your age, and she is always busy. You could help me.

TAISSIA: Oh, could I? Could I really?

TIATIN: If you really want to. Now run along. (*She goes out to kitchen.*)

YAKOV: Now you have even got Taissia enthusiastic. Well, I must go along and speak to Donat. (*He finishes his cup of tea and follows Taissia.*)

TIATIN: Donat's a good fellow. Simple and transparent, but as honest as the day. Have you ever stopped to think what it means for a man of his age to change his views? He was brought up to believe in God and the Czar, to believe that

it was his duty to serve the landowner. Do you remember Tolstoi: 'I lived for God and nothing came of it, now I live for the people.' He understands the peasants, and they listen to him.

SHURA: Tiatin, I am going to help.

TIATIN: What are you going to do?

SHURA: I am going to be like Taissia, I am going to help you.

TIATIN: And what use do you think you would be to me?

SHURA: Tiatin, down on your knees!

TIATIN: Have you gone mad?

SHURA: On the contrary I have at last made up my mind.

TIATIN: Made up your mind about what?

SHURA: Down on your knees before I do something terrible.

TIATIN: Wait a minute, I'll fetch Glasha.

SHURA (*picking up a cup*): Are you going down on your knees or shall I start smashing the crockery? (*Tiatin hesitates, and she smashes cup and hastily reaches for another.*)

SHURA: Now?

TIATIN (*dropping on his knees*): Perhaps I'm going mad.

SHURA: That's better. Now repeat after me: 'Shura, I love you.'

TIATIN: Stop fooling.

SHURA (*threatening with another cup*): Shura, I love you.

TIATIN: Do you mean . . .

SHURA: Shura, I love you.

TIATIN: I won't, you are only making a fool of me. (*Then quickly as Shura smashes the second cup and reaches for a third*) Shura, I love you. Now are you satisfied?

SHURA: Don't get up. Repeat after me. 'I have loved you for a long time but I have been afraid to tell you.' (*He hesitates and she holds the cup up threateningly. Dostigaeff comes in from the hall.*)

DOSTIGAEFF: What on earth?

SHURA: Er . . . er . . . I was . . . er we were . . . I was explaining something to Tiatin. (*She goes out hurriedly.*)

DOSTIGAEFF: Has everybody gone mad? What are you creeping about for?

TIATIN: I have lost something.

DOSTIGAEFF: Lost what?

TIATIN: Lost what? Oh, really it doesn't matter, you see I

really don't know. I heard something drop and I thought I must have dropped it.

DOSTIGAEFF: Are you feeling well?

TIATIN: Oh, yes, yes . . . er . . . that is . . . er . . . no.

DOSTIGAEFF: What is the matter? Head?

TIATIN: Slightly, but it will soon pass. Did you want to see me?

DOSTIGAEFF: Yes, I wondered whether you had heard anything? You can trust me. Pavlin tells me that all is not well in Petrograd.

TIATIN (*refusing to be drawn out*): No?

DOSTIGAEFF: I keep my eyes open. Do you think I don't know that you have gone over to the bolsheviks?

TIATIN: If I had gone over to the bolsheviks I imagine that I should be opposed to the merchants. If I am not mistaken, you come within that class.

DOSTIGAEFF: All merchants are not fools. I have heard you speak and I respect your views.

TIATIN: I believe in such cases it is customary to say thank you. I didn't expect it.

DOSTIGAEFF: Please be serious. If the country is to be ruled by the peasant and the factory worker, what is to happen to the landowner and the merchant? Do you intend to destroy us irretrievably? It won't be easy to run the country without the help of experienced people.

TIATIN: We will find them.

DOSTIGAEFF: And we are to be consigned to prisons and internment camps.

TIATIN: For those of you who are willing, there will be work to do.

DOSTIGAEFF: Perhaps some little government job. . . .

TIATIN: I am afraid that I must go now, I am busy. (*He goes out into the kitchen. Melania appears suddenly from the door right.*)

MELANIA: I heard everything he said. The devil! To think that we have to let bandits like that be at liberty. And we can't even have him arrested.

DOSTIGAEFF: No, times have changed quickly; a few months ago they were being imprisoned right and left, but now there are too many of them. The movement is spreading, no one knows how big it is. They work in the dark, the whole country is seething under the skin.

MELANIA: And you are going to do nothing?

DOSTIGAEFF: The cleverer ones will save themselves. Perhaps if one joins them for a time, and then later. . .

MELANIA: What about the army?

DOSTIGAEFF: The army has enough to do to look after its own troubles. If the bolsheviks gain power they will at least put a stop to the farce of this war.

MELANIA: The Czar did not think it was useless.

DOSTIGAEFF: The Czar was a fool, and Europe treated him like a fool. What could Russia gain by a war with Germany? Half Russia is dying of famine, and all this petty-fogging lawyer Kerenski can think of is carrying on the war.

MELANIA: So you, too, are crying for peace? (*Varvara comes in from the hall.*) What kind of a house is this, Varvara? are you running a club for bolsheviks?

VARVARA: What do you mean?

DOSTIGAEFF: Where is Svontzoff?

VARVARA: He's outside with Alexei, they are talking to Shura. (*There is a muffled report.*) What's that?

DOSTIGAEFF: Some fool starting trouble. There was a row in the market-place yesterday. Mokroussoff lost his head and started shooting at nothing. (*There is another report. Varvara runs out right.*)

MELANIA (*at window*): It looks like Tiatin.

VARVARA (*off*): Quickly, something has happened to Andrej. (*Dostigaeff goes off, Glasha and Taissia come out of the kitchen and follow him off through the hall.*)

MELANIA: It is the judgment of God. (*Varvara and Alexei come in with Svontzoff, exhausted and wildly excited. Alexei is holding a pistol.*)

SVONTZOFF: I had to, I was attacked. I swear I was attacked.

VARVARA: Are you hurt?

SVONTZOFF: No, . . . it was I who did the shooting. It was self-defence.

MELANIA: Who were you shooting at?

SVONTZOFF: I had to . . . I . . . (*he breaks down. Dostigaeff comes in.*)

DOSTIGAEFF (*to Alexei*): Put that gun in your pocket. (*He crosses to Svontzoff.*)

SVONTZOFF: Leave me alone.

DOSTIGAEFF: Here, sit on the sofa. (*To Varvara*) Fetch him some water.

MELANIA: Well, who attacked you?

SVONTZOFF: I tell you I don't know, it was dark. I swear it was dark. I was attacked. (*Glasha and Yakov bring in Tiatin whose arm is bleeding freely. Taissia stands a little behind them.*)

YAKOV: You're lying and you know it. I was in front and Tiatin was behind; you let fly at me.

VARVARA (*coming back*): Here is some vodka.

YAKOV: Give it to Svontzoff.

DOSTIGAEFF: Well, well, it's lucky it was no worse. One can understand it, the darkness and . . .

SHURA (*coming in*): What's happened? Tiatin. My dear, are you hurt?

TIATIN: It's nothing, it's barely a scratch. (*Glasha has torn up a shirt she was mending and is binding the wound. Dostigaeff whispers to his son and they go out. Varvara helps Svontzoff up from the settee.*)

SHURA (*to Varvara*): Go across the road and fetch the doctor.

VARVARA (*offensively*): Have you any more orders? (*Glasha goes out for the doctor.*) Melania, will you help me with Andrej?

MELANIA: Come along, Taissia.

TAISSIA: You swine!

MELANIA: How dare you?

TAISSIA: You swine!

MELANIA: God will punish you for this.

TAISSIA: You filth!

TIATIN: Come here, Taissia.

TAISSIA: No, I hate her! Go on, hit me! I'm not afraid of you or your God! Go on, hit me!

Curtain.

ACT III

A room in Dostigaeff's house. Evening. In the centre of the back wall a fireplace, and on either side of it doorways covered by curtains. The room behind the door on the left is dimly lit; that on the right is in darkness. In the left wall, downstage, is a small door matching the wall-paper and scarcely noticeable. Above this doorway is a piano. Right a settee and behind it two windows looking on to a yard. It is a friendly room, thickly carpeted, with comfortable, if old-fashioned furniture. At a small card table Alexei is seated, playing patience. Antonia comes in through the small door.

ANTONIA: It's freezing. Oh, it's all so hopeless, they started the revolution in February, and now it's November and they don't seem to have got any further. *(There is a pause.)* What?

ALEXEI: I didn't say anything.

ANTONIA: I must say you looked better in your uniform. In that suit you look like an ex-policeman. *(She lights the lamp.)* How long did the French Revolution take?

ALEXEI: I don't know.

ANTONIA: Things should be done quickly and neatly or not at all. *(She mixes his cards.)*

ALEXEI *(good humouredly)*: Pig!

ANTONIA: You know, I think I will commit suicide.

ALEXEI: By the way, what happened to Svontzoff's revolver? I left it in the drawer of the bureau.

ANTONIA: You came home abominably drunk last night.

ALEXEI: Yes, we had an officers' farewell party, they dug out a case of damn good brandy. Have you seen anything of Tiatin? It seems that he is one of the leaders and Nestrasny is after him with his black hundreds. There were two bolsheviks found on Sunday with their heads battered in; that looks like Nestrasny's work.

ANTONIA: I'm not interested in politics, tell Shura. *(She lights a cigarette.)*

DOSTIGAEFF *(coming in from the door left)*: Where is your mother?

ALEXEI: She is in the library with Victor.

DOSTIGAEFF: A library, a drawing-room, a study, a smoking-room . . . when we lived in two rooms I knew where to find things. Ask her what has happened to my slippers. *(Alexei goes out down left.)*

DOSTIGAEFF *(collecting cards)*: Have you been playing patience?

ANTONIA: It was Alexei.

DOSTIGAEFF: What's young Nestrasny doing in the library with Elizaveta?

ANTONIA: You've no need to be jealous over Mamma. It's my dowery Victor is after.

DOSTIGAEFF: You are growing up too fast for me.

ANTONIA: Yes Daddy, we mature early these days.

DOSTIGAEFF: When I was your age it wasn't considered lady-like to smoke, even in the privacy of your own room, and there you sit with a cigarette in your mouth as though it was the most natural thing in the world. Shura is the same. There doesn't seem to be anything feminine about girls these days.

ANTONIA: Do you mind?

DOSTIGAEFF: No, but I can't get used to it, that's all. Have you seen Shura?

ANTONIA: Not for some time.

DOSTIGAEFF: She has changed since Yegor died. I wonder what he would think of her. Varvara turns her out of the house and she takes up with Tiatin and the bolsheviks. I wonder what will happen to her.

ANTONIA: I suppose she will stick to Tiatin.

DOSTIGAEFF: If it means prison and exile? By the way have you any idea why they are keeping so quiet lately?

ANTONIA: I'm not interested.

DOSTIGAEFF: I'd like to know. If you meet Shura try to find out. *(Alexei comes back with Victor Nestrasny.)*

VICTOR: I suppose that nowhere in the world are books so much in demand as they are in Russia at this moment. Good evening. I've just been discussing books with your wife.

DOSTIGAEFF: I didn't know Elizaveta ever read books.

VICTOR: We have been discussing them purely from a business point of view. I wondered whether you would be interested. At a time like this a clever publisher could make a fortune.

DOSTIGAEFF: I manufacture boots.

VICTOR: Not only could you make a fortune but I am sure that the Government could be persuaded to make a grant if they were approached in the right way. As part of a campaign against the bolshevik literature which is being distributed everywhere. . . .

DOSTIGAEFF: Excuse me, Alexei has forgotten my slippers. *(He goes out.)*

ALEXEI: You can't trade in books in the same way as you sell boots and shoes. The people will not read what they are told.

VICTOR: It's useless trying to talk to you highbrows. Business is business and a real control of the Press would do more than anything to stabilize the Government. *(Antonia suddenly gets up and goes off through the door right.)* What is the matter with Antonia?

ALEXEI: I think that she is bored with politics.

VICTOR: She's been spoilt.

ALEXEI: Do you think so?

VICTOR: Were you at the party yesterday?

ALEXEI: Yes.

VICTOR: Did you lose?

ALEXEI: A thousand roubles.

VICTOR: Phew!

ALEXEI: And the devil knows where it's coming from. I daren't tell Father.

VICTOR: Bad luck. The officers are suspiciously lucky at cards.

ALEXEI: I was drunk, I was a fool to play at all.

VICTOR: If I help you out of your mess will you do something for me?

ALEXEI: What is it you want?

VICTOR: I want you to help me with Antonia.

ALEXEI: Don't worry, Antonia will marry you all right, what else is there for her to do?

VICTOR: She has changed lately. Shura Bulichoff has a bad influence on her.

ALEXEI: Why don't you speak to her yourself. Nothing I could say would have any effect on Antonia.

VICTOR: Perhaps if you were to mention . . . *(Glasha comes in with a tray and clears away some things.)* Think it over.

ALEXEI: Let's go into the library for a drink.

VICTOR *(nodding towards Glasha)*: What is she doing here?

ALEXEI: She was kicked out by Svontzoff. Mother had her over to look after the new house. *(They go out. Glasha continues to clear the things. Elizaveta comes in.)*

ELIZAVETA: Where is Tonia?

GLASHA: I think she has gone to her room.

ELIZAVETA: Tonia! What is that child doing always sulking in her room, it's unhealthy. Tonia!

ANTONIA *(appearing)*: All right, I am here. *(Glasha has finished clearing and goes out.)*

ELIZAVETA: What are you hiding yourself away for? you know that Victor came here to see you.

ANTONIA: I wanted to be alone.

ELIZAVETA: I can't think what has come over you lately.

You do nothing but hide yourself away and pore over books.

I suppose it's Shura's doing. I'm sure they can't make you any happier. I may be stupid, my dear, but I haven't got anything to worry about. When I was your age I lived for pleasure; got about; saw things. Men don't like blue stockings. Your father found me attractive enough, and he's a good judge.

DOSTIGAEFF *(coming in)*: What are you saying about me?

ELIZAVETA: We are praising you. I just said that you were a good judge of women, and I was going on to say that you were the cleverest man in this town.

DOSTIGAEFF: Don't let me stop you.

ELIZAVETA: Your father is the cleverest man in this town. There!

DOSTIGAEFF: I wish I was clever enough to know what is happening. Yosip says that there is important news from Petrograd but nobody knows what it is about. Tonia, are you sure that Shura told you nothing?

ANTONIA: You asked me that question before. *(She goes out to her room.)*

DOSTIGAEFF: Tonia is looking ill. I wish that she would marry Victor and settle down. He's a fool but he's rich, and she could twist him round her little finger. It's better to have a manageable husband than a clever one. Look at Svontzoff, Varvara does what she likes with him. Aren't you sorry that you didn't marry a fool?

ELIZAVETA: I am quite satisfied as I am, and you are not so wise.

DOSTIGAEFF: I am wise enough to know that you are not telling the truth. I am too old for you, you need someone younger. Young men attract you. I can give you affection, but not love.

ELIZAVETA: I prefer your affection to another's love. You are jealous, aren't you?

DOSTIGAEFF: Whenever I see you talking to a younger man, I think . . .

ELIZAVETA: You need never worry, I shan't leave you. If you can't love me, nobody shall love me, nobody.

DOSTIGAEFF: Elizaveta, do you mean that?

ELIZAVETA: I told you you weren't so wise. (*Glasha comes back with the tray.*)

DOSTIGAEFF (*changing his tone*): It's high time that you took life seriously, we should keep abreast of the times. Even I have taken to reading. I was reading Darwin; he teaches us that we must adapt ourselves or perish. Everything lives because it adapts itself to its surroundings. (*They go out. Antonia comes in.*)

GLASHA: Shura sent a message to say that she will not be here to-night. I shall see her, shall I give her any message?

ANTONIA (*after a pause*): No, I won't bother. Glasha, is something really serious starting?

GLASHA: I don't know.

ANTONIA: If it does, you will join them. What will happen to me? I am neither with them nor against them, I am outside it all.

GLASHA: If you would go to some of their meetings, it would help you to understand. There is plenty of room for helpers in the party.

ANTONIA: There is no room for me; I don't fit. I haven't been brought up to think things out for myself. I don't want you to feel sorry for me.

GLASHA: It's not that I feel sorry, but I don't understand. Here you are, among people who live freely; you read what books you like, you have every opportunity of getting the best out of life and yet . . .

ANTONIA: And yet I am useless to myself and everybody else, that's it, isn't it?

GLASHA: There are many like you.

ANTONIA: That is a poor consolation. What happened to that convent girl who was staying with you?

GLASHA: Taissia? She will find her place.

ANTONIA: Well, good-bye, Glasha.

GLASHA: I am not leaving to-day.

ANTONIA: No? Tell Shura I am writing her. Good-bye. (*She goes back to her room. Glasha looks after her for a few moments and then goes out. A pause. Dostigaeff comes in with Pavlin.*)

DOSTIGAEFF: I guessed, Yosip said that there was news. Well, in Petrograd there's a new Government, the Workers' Government. The country is to be ruled by factory hands. Well, my father worked in a factory, so did my grandfather, and his father before him. One might almost say I have descended from the ruling classes.

PAVLIN: It's all very well to joke. Of course this may be only a rumour. . . .

DOSTIGAEFF: You will find that it is more than a rumour, my friend. If it isn't, what has happened to Kerenski and the army. For that matter, where are any officers of the Provisional Government?

PAVLIN: If it is true, it means that Petrograd is in the hands of nobodies, aliens, unbelievers.

DOSTIGAEFF: It will happen here, too. Sooner than you expect. If you are wise you will find that it makes no difference. We must change our tactics, that is all: swim with the tide and not against it.

PAVLIN: I understand that Nestrasny is raising an armed force. He is coming here to see you.

DOSTIGAEFF (*alarmed*): Nestrasny! Coming here?

PAVLIN: He was with Gubin at the club, they spoke of electing a leader.

DOSTIGAEFF: Things may happen at any moment.

ELIZAVETA (*coming in*): What's the matter? You look ill.

DOSTIGAEFF: It's nothing, nothing. I must speak to Glasha. (*He goes out.*)

ELIZAVETA (*to Pavlin*): Have you brought bad news?

PAVLIN: The Provisional Government has fallen. Petrograd is in the hands of the bolsheviks.

ELIZAVETA: Is that all? I thought it was serious.

PAVLIN: It means the end of Russia.

ELIZAVETA: Nonsense, in a few months everything will quieten down and we shall be exactly as we were. In the meantime we shall go to live in Paris. I have always wanted to live in Paris. (*There is a crash off.*) What is that?

PAVLIN: It sounds as though someone was breaking in.

ELIZAVETA (*going to window*): There are some men outside.

PAVLIN: It's the bolsheviks! I tell you they are breaking in.

O God, why hast thou forsaken me?

ELIZAVETA: There's someone in the kitchen. (*Gubin and Nestrasny come in hurriedly.*)

PAVLIN: Gubin!

GUBIN: Ah! The priest! All right, don't be afraid, it's not you we want; at a time like this we can afford to bury old squabbles. Where's Dostigaeff?

NESTRASNY (*to Elizaveta*): We are sorry to push our way in like this; but the matter is urgent.

ELIZAVETA: I don't understand, my husband . . .

DOSTIGAEFF (*reappearing*): A surprise! I am glad to see you.

GUBIN: You don't look exactly glad. Go straight ahead, Nestrasny.

NESTRASNY: The Government is under arrest. The soldiers together with the workers have plundered and set fire to the Winter Palace. Kerenski has fled.

PAVLIN: I have just . . .

DOSTIGAEFF: Keep your mouth shut. Well, what has all this to do with me?

NESTRASNY: We have come to you because you are one of the few courageous ones left amongst us. Your position here is well known, the people will listen to what you have to say.

DOSTIGAEFF: Thank you for the compliment, but if you are looking for a leader what about yourself? You have had experience. Your leadership of the black hundreds is now hardly a secret.

NESTRASNY: This is not the time to remember old accomplishments. They will be organizing a committee of safety in Moscow; someone must represent that committee here. Are you with us or against us?

DOSTIGAEFF: Why should you think that I should be against you?

GUBIN: We want a straight answer.

DOSTIGAEFF: To what?

NESTRASNY: Who's side are you on, ours or theirs?

DOSTIGAEFF: I am concerned only with my own safety.

NESTRASNY: So you refuse to join us?

DOSTIGAEFF: To join you in what?

GUBIN: We intend to defend our position with force.

DOSTIGAEFF: That will need men.

NESTRASNY: We have the officers, we will find the men.

DOSTIGAEFF: Men are not easy to find these days. If you are relying on fools like Mokroussoff you will find that they fade away at the first sign of trouble. Besides, you will have to hurry.

NESTRASNY: What do you mean? (*Dostigaeff does not answer.*)

Have you had any further news?

ALEXEI (*rushing in*): Father, there has been an accident.

ELIZAVETA: An accident?

ALEXEI: Tonia! She's been depressed lately, but I didn't think . . .

DOSTIGAEFF: Pull yourself together. What has happened?

ALEXI: The revolver, it was missing from the drawer. . . .

In the head . . .

DOSTIGAEFF: You are mad. Tonia! (*He goes out followed by Alexei, Elizaveta and Pavlin.*)

GUBIN: What did he mean, an accident?

NESTRASNY: She has shot herself.

GUBIN: Let us get out of here.

DOSTIGAEFF (*returning*): My daughter is dead, Nestrasny.

Please excuse me. I am not fit to talk about outside affairs.

NESTRASNY: Outside affairs!

DOSTIGAEFF: It would be better if you were to leave now, both of you.

NESTRASNY: What are you keeping back? You know something.

DOSTIGAEFF: It would be better if you both left my house as soon as you can. (*There are noises of shouting off. Elizaveta comes in.*)

ELIZAVETA: The soldiers!

NESTRASNY: The soldiers? What is this, a trap?

DOSTIGAEFF: What do you mean, a trap? Did I ask you to

come here? You force your way into my house, try to mix me up in your schemes. . . . You came here without any invitation from me.

GUBIN: You'll pay for this. (*Yakov appears in the doorway holding a pistol, behind him a bearded soldier with a rifle and two hand grenades in his belt. Through the doorway are seen other soldiers and factory workers.*)

NESTRASNY (*in a frightened whisper*): What do you want?

YAKOV: You, Nestrasny, are under arrest.

NESTRASNY: By what right . . .

YAKOV: You will learn about that in due course. Search the house.

ELIZAVETA: This is a house of mourning. My daughter is dead.

YAKOV: Tonia dead? What has happened, an accident?

ELIZAVETA: No, by her own hand. She shot herself. There is a letter she has left for Shura; do you know where I can find her?

YAKOV: I am sorry. I will deliver it for you. Under the circumstances . . . You must pardon me for this intrusion. (*To the soldiers*) Take these men out. Gubin, you are also under arrest.

GUBIN: What about Dostigaeff? He also is a merchant and a landowner.

YAKOV (*ignoring him*): Send an armed escort.

NESTRASNY: By what right are you doing this? Who are you? Who appointed you commander?

YAKOV: Bluffing won't help you, Nestrasny. You know perfectly well who I am. You have me on your black list of persons you wish to assassinate. Your son Victor and Mokrousoff are also under arrest.

NESTRASNY: Well, you have arrested me, what next? What Court of Justice is going to try me?

SOLDIER: Don't you worry; you'll be hanged legally. You don't remember me, but I have a good memory for faces. I remember you well from the time you broke up the riots in 1907.

YAKOV: That will do. You are charged with attempting to organize an armed attack upon the Workers' Soviet, and upon the Soldiers and Peasants' Representatives. Are you satisfied?

NESTRASNY: Very well, we'll go with you. (*To Gubin*) They won't dare to harm us. (*They go out followed by several soldiers. The bearded soldier remains in the doorway.*)

YAKOV (*to Elizaveta*): May I have Antonia's letter? (*She gives it to him.*) May I read it?

ELIZAVETA: If you wish.

YAKOV (*reading aloud*): 'Good-bye, Shura. I don't regret anything. Only with you I felt warm and happy sometimes.' (*He is silent for a moment.*) I will give it to her when I think it is the best time. (*A pause.*) May I see Tonia? (*Elizaveta silently leads the way. Dostigaeff stands motionless. The bearded soldier is fingering the curtains by the doorway.*)

SOLDIER: That's a fine piece of cloth. They don't make our uniforms out of such good material.

DOSTIGAEFF: They will in future.

SOLDIER: There won't be any uniforms in future. We have finished with the war.

DOSTIGAEFF: That's even better.

SOLDIER: One of our first jobs is to convince the world that war is useless.

DOSTIGAEFF: That's as it should be.

SOLDIER: Even you see the folly of fighting. When we have hanged the last capitalist we shall see the beginnings of a world peace. Death is too good for Nestrasny and those of his kidney.

DOSTIGAEFF: Er . . . yes.

SOLDIER: You knew him. I met him in the strike in 1907. What were you doing in those days?

DOSTIGAEFF: Would you like a glass of wine?

SOLDIER: I am afraid that is forbidden while we are on duty. You see, I am sort of sentry here.

DOSTIGAEFF: Does that mean I am under arrest?

SOLDIER: I am told to stay on guard here, that's all I know. (*Elizaveta comes back.*)

DOSTIGAEFF: My wife and I, we'd . . . Do you mind?

SOLDIER: Of course. (*He retires.*)

DOSTIGAEFF: Has Yakov gone?

ELIZAVETA: Yes. Why did he come here?

DOSTIGAEFF: I sent Glasha for him as soon as I heard Nestrasny was coming here.

ELIZAVETA: What will happen now? Do you think we are safe?

DOSTIGAEFF: I think so. It was a near thing. It wouldn't have worked if it hadn't been for. . . . (*quietly*) Poor Tonia!

PAVLIN (*coming in*): You've got rid of them.

DOSTIGAEFF: Where have you been hiding?

PAVLIN: Hiding? I merely decided that my presence was not wanted. If you had called for me, I assure you that I was within earshot.

ELIZAVETA: It won't be safe to go out yet. You had better stay the night.

PAVLIN: Thank you, I was about to suggest. . .

DOSTIGAEFF (*suddenly very tired and old*): So now we are in the hands of Lapteff and the workers.

PAVLIN: Those people are too young to understand the needs of a great country like ours.

ELIZAVETA (*to Dostigaeff*): Everything will turn out all right. You mustn't worry. Would you like a glass of vodka?

PAVLIN: A glass of vodka, thanks. Excellent. (*Elizaveta pours them both a glass.*)

PAVLIN: Your health, Dostigaeff. I congratulate you. You got rid of them, excellent, admirably done. You fooled them properly.

SOLDIER (*coming back*): Drinking?

ELIZAVETA: Why are you still here?

SOLDIER: Nothing to be afraid of. I am just staying here in case. . . . (*To Pavlin*) Where have you sprung from?

PAVLIN: I am. . . er. . . just going.

SOLDIER: I am afraid not. My orders are to see that nobody leaves.

ELIZAVETA: Do you mean that we are under arrest?

SOLDIER: No, no! Don't you take any notice of me. You just sit still and drink your wine. I've just to keep an eye on you, that's all.

Curtain.